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Ogarkov's disinformation credentials

In mid-July, Hedrick Smith of *The New York Times* — citing "reliable information reaching here" (Washington, D.C.) — reported that in "a significant military shake-up" the Soviets have "rehabilitated" Marshal Nikolai V. Ogarkov, "who was dismissed as Chief of the General Staff nine months ago." Mr. Ogarkov's new job, it is said, is commander of the joint forces of the Warsaw Pact, the Soviet bloc's counterpart of NATO.

And in a news analysis datelined Moscow, *The Washington Post's* Celestine Bohlen has reported that in September of 1984, "for reasons that are still mysterious," Mr. Ogarkov was "booted from his job as chief of the general staff." But now, there are "indications" he might be coming back into favor because a booklet of his has been published and reviewed in the official Soviet press.

In September of 1983, from Moscow, Mr. Ogarkov was the chief ringmaster who presided over a world-wide televised dog-and-pony circus which purported to explain what really happened when the Soviets shot down the Korean jetliner, murdering, among others, more than 60 Americans.

At the time, *The New York Times* referred to him only as the "chief of the Soviet General Staff." Ditto, *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New Republic* magazine. And *Newsweek* magazine — noting that Mr. Ogarkov was "known for his competence" — said that as the Soviet Defense Ministry's representative to the SALT negotiations, "he earned the respect of his U.S. counterparts and was viewed as one of the new, less rigid

Soviet military leaders who gave Western observers hope for arms-control progress."

Well, now. Any "news" out of the Soviet Union about anything should be taken with the proverbial grain of salt. But we should be exceptionally skeptical when it comes to what is said by or about Mr. Ogarkov. And yes, that includes what I am about to tell you:

In the foreword to the recent book *Inside the Soviet Army* by Viktor Suvorov (a pseudonym), Gen. Sir John Hackett says that Mr. Suvorov is a defector — under sentence of death in the U.S.S.R. — who spent 15

years in regular service in the Soviet Army, in troop command and on the staff, which included command of a motor rifle company in the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.

And now, about Mr. Ogarkov, Mr. Suvorov says this: he has been commander of the Chief Directorate for Strategic Deception, which is described as "the most powerful" unit in the Soviet General Staff. Says Mr. Suvorov:

"Strategic Deception is that part of the General Staff which is responsible for all military censorship —

for all censorship in the fields of science, technology, economics, and so forth. This directorate makes a careful study of everything that is known in the West about the Soviet Union and fabricates an enormous amount of material in order to distort the true picture. This most powerful organization supervises all military parades and any military exercises at which foreigners are to be present, it is responsible for relations with the service attaches of all foreign countries, including those with 'fraternal' ties with the Soviet Union.

"This octopus-like organization runs (more than) a hundred military newspapers and journals. Nothing can be published in the U.S.S.R. without a permit from its head, no film can appear without one, not a single troop movement can take place without permission from the Chief Directorate, no rocket-base, no barracks — even for the troops of the KGB — can be built without its agreement, nor can a single factory, collective farm, pipeline, or railway be constructed without its prior permission. Everything in this huge country must be done in such a way that the enemy always has a false impression of what is going on.

"In some fields, achievements are deliberately concealed; in others — as was done with anti-missile defense — they are exaggerated out of all recognition. In addition, of course, representatives of the Chief Directorate, helped by Soviet military intelligence, have recruited a collection of mercenary hack journalists abroad, through which it spreads false information disguised as serious studies. Its representa-

tives attend negotiations concerned with detente, peace, disarmament, etc.

"For instance . . . when the stakes were at their highest (during one

series of SALT discussions), the head of the Chief Directorate, Gen. Ogarkov himself, joined the delegation. He made a brilliant success of the operation to fool the American delegation. For this he was made chief of the General Staff and at the same time was promoted to Marshal of the Soviet Union."

Among the examples of successful deception achieved by Mr. Ogarkov, Mr. Suvorov says that when the Soviets built the "excellent rocket" with the military designation UR-100 (meaning universal rocket) "its manufacture was an out-and-out violation of the SALT I agreement, but no protest came from the American side" because Mr. Ogarkov's organization succeeded in concealing the rocket's defensive function.

The SALT I agreement was also circumvented when the Soviet anti-aircraft rocket, the S-200, was developed, but Mr. Ogarkov's organization never allowed it to appear in any parades, in any variant. Says Mr. Suvorov: "The Chief Directorate of Strategic Deception is strict in its observance of the principle: 'The enemy should see only what Ogarkov wishes to show them.'"

When I asked *Newsweek* general editor Melinda Beck — who wrote her magazine's glowing account of Mr. Ogarkov's "competence" and stated he was one of the "new, less rigid" Soviet military leaders — if she knew about the Suvorov book, she replied no, she didn't and that no information she had suggested that Mr. Ogarkov was what Mr. Suvorov said he was.

So, we have undoubtedly not heard the last of Mr. Nikolai V. Ogarkov. And whatever we have heard and read, or will hear and read, remember: this is a man whose job is disinformation. And he does his job very well indeed.

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